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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: December 1, 1950

SUBJECT: Notes on Meeting in JCS Conference Room, Pentagon, 8:30 AM, December 1, 1950

PARTICIPANTS:

Secretary George C. Marshall	Secretary Dean Acheson
General of the Army Omar N. Bradley	Mr. H. Freeman Matthews
General J. Lawton Collins	Mr. Dean Rusk
Admiral Forrest P. Sherman	Mr. Paul H. Nitze
General Nathan F. Twining	Mr. Philip C. Jessup
Under Secretary Robert A. Lovett	General Bedell Smith
	Secretary Francis P. Matthews
Secretary Frank Pace	Mr. Averell Harriman
Secretary Thomas Finletter	

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Copies to: The Secretary, Mr. Rusk, Mr. Matthews, Mr. Nitze

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SECRETARY ACHESON opened the discussion by referring to the desire to resume the very useful session which had previously been held. It was now necessary to consider the contingency which had not been covered in the previous discussion; namely, what to do in case the offensive failed. He summarized the action in the Security Council yesterday and referred to the virtual state of panic which seemed to exist among our friends in New York. Many are complaining that the United States' leadership has failed, and the present difficulties are the fault of General MacArthur's action. It is of the greatest importance that we should again bring about unity among our friends. The effect of disunity is felt not only in Asia but also in Europe. We must, accordingly, restore confidence so that we can get results in our European defense plans. It is essential that what we do in the political field be coordinated with military considerations and make sense from that point of view. He then summarized the various considerations under points one and two of the attached memorandum prepared by Mr. Rusk. He emphasized the thought, which he said he was advancing for purposes of discussion only and not because he felt sure it was the proper solution, that if a line could be established from a military point of view a political attempt should be made to attach some sanctity to it. If this could be done de facto, perhaps it would open up a field of negotiation. He raised the question of a military desirability of a cease-fire resolution if some of our friends suggested it in the United Nations. He discussed the

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discussed the possibility that we might agree to it and the Chinese would not, as well as the possibility that if the Chinese agreed they would still not carry it out loyally while we did. He suggested the possibility of armistice teams along the pattern which General Marshall had followed in China. He then passed to a consideration of subsequent actions and raised the question whether we could get out of Korea hoping the Chinese would also withdraw into Manchuria. We might then leave the ROK against the North Koreans. The question was where that would leave us. In any event, we must do something in Korea, and we must do something to counter the rapid resurgence of neutralism in Germany. He had under consideration the advisability of his going to New York next week to speak in the General Assembly, but did not wish to do so until the United States Government has an agreed plan. If from a military point of view it is impossible to hold a line, we are confronted with a new set of problems and must proceed on different assumptions. He requested guidance from the military.

GENERAL BRADLEY said it was hard to give answers now. Unless the Tenth Corps can succeed in regrouping, it is hard to stabilize a line. One cannot tell now. If our losses are heavy in the east, we may not have enough troops to hold a line. There is an indication of very heavy traffic representing large reinforcements coming in from Manchuria. We may have to fall much further back.

SECRETARY ACHESON inquired where, from a military point of view, it would be most useful to have the Tenth Corps.

At General Marshall's request, General Bradley showed the Secretary a telegram the Joint Chiefs of Staff had sent to General MacArthur last night.

GENERAL BRADLEY said the telegram had been cleared with the President at ten after ten last evening. The gist of the message was that they felt it was desirable to group the Tenth Corps, and it ended with a statement which General Marshall said that he had inserted telling General MacArthur that from the point of view of his United Nations mission it was unnecessary to hold the territory northeast of the waist and that except for strategic and tactical considerations involving the security of his command he could ignore that area.

GENERAL COLLINS said it might well be that we would have to have a gap between the Tenth Corps in the Hamhung-Wonsan area and the Eighth Army on the west.

SECRETARY ACHESON again inquired what would be the most advantageous thing for us to do; e.g., buying time by a cease-fire.

GENERAL COLLINS

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GENERAL COLLINS said we could not tell now. He thought that someone should go out to Japan immediately to find out the situation on the spot.

GENERAL MARSHALL agreed that it would be useful for General Collins to go today. He said it was hard to establish a line. The Tenth Corps on the east coast would have ports available for supplies or for evacuation if necessary. Such evacuation might succeed in taking out at least three-fourths of the force. However, it lets the communists converge all of its forces on either one or the other of our two main positions. The Chinese Communists may put in their air force at any time. A line of the kind that Secretary Acheson had referred to was not a practical proposition. We may be able to hold on both the west and the east separately, but we cannot give a firm answer on this now.

MR. RUSK inquired whether the same considerations would apply to holding the line elsewhere, for example at the 38th Parallel or at the Han River.

GENERAL COLLINS replied that the waist was the shortest line, and there was no natural line at the 38th Parallel. There was still a question about the intentions of the Chinese Communists. He repeated it was very hard to move our two groups to any one place. Probably the only possibility would be to withdraw our troops from the east by sea around to the west. There would be no other way to withdraw. There are no really useful ports between Wonsan and Pusan.

ADMIRAL SHERMAN said from a strategic point of view we should be on the islands and off the mainland, but the abandonment of Korea would be dangerous to Japan due to airfields in Korea. From this standpoint, it would be desirable for us to hold at the waist as a long-term strategic plan. We may end up with Inchon, Wonsan and Pusan as supply bases. For some reason, the Chinese Communists have allowed us to maintain sole control of the air. We should not interfere with this situation until our position is straightened out. Therefore, the advantages of keeping our air on our side of the frontier outweigh the disadvantages, but we must decide in advance what to do if the Chinese Communist air comes in. If Russian air were added, we might not be able to hold. There is a good chance to get a useful line of positions tied to ports avoiding any detached force not supplied by sea. If the position is stabilized, the question is what we do next. Shall we strengthen our Pacific Fleet at the expense of the Atlantic? Where do we get more ground troops for needs in the Far East?

GENERAL HADLEY said the question was if the Chinese air comes in do we want to hit back. To do so might draw in the Soviet air. If this is true, we may have to defer striking. He was not sure this question should be decided in advance.

GENERAL COLLINS

GENERAL COLLINS strongly supported General Bradley. If we hit back, it is a strong provocation of the Chinese and may possibly bring in Soviet air and even submarines. The only chance then left to save us is the use or the threat of the use of the A-bomb. We should therefore hold back from bombing in China even if this means that our ground forces must take some punishment from the air.

ADMIRAL SHERMAN said that he did not disagree with this provided we do not have to take too much from the Chinese air force.

GENERAL COLLINS said he strongly dissented from Admiral Sherman's view about holding Korea. He thought Korea was not worth a nickel while the Russians hold Vladivostok and positions on the other flank.

GENERAL BEDELL SMITH said that they were now preparing a new estimate which would be distributed not later than Monday which makes a much better case than they previously thought for Russian plans for war soon. It could be assumed that their first purpose is to defeat European rearmament. They probably do not plan on war now but are willing to have it if they can bog us down in Asia. They will never accept a Korea in hostile hands. We should get out of Korea although we do not solve the problem by getting out. The Russians are sure we don't intend to get into war in Asia, and so feel that they can push us as far as they want. The new estimate would indicate probable Soviet reactions during the next 12 to 24 months. They could bleed us to death in Asia while defeating the armament effort in Europe. The recent PRAVDA article is a clear indication that they fully understand our situation.

MR. LOVETT said he understood there was a concensus on two points: first, that Korea is not a decisive area for us; and second, that, while the loss of Korea might jeopardize Japan and perhaps bring about its eventual loss, Western Europe was our prime concern and we would rather see that result than lose Western Europe. It was best to hold Korea for political moves. We should regroup our troops and stall for time. We might then move in on securing a cease-fire or a truce along the model used in Palestine. We should deliberately admit to ourselves that part of the condition would be that the Chinese withdraw while we do too. This might involve the abandonment of Korea.

GENERAL COLLINS said that he did not think that the loss of Korea would involve the loss of Japan, but in reply to Secretary Acheson's question agreed that the political consequences in Japan might be different. He said it was illusory to think of making a line and turning it over to the ROK to hold at least before a year had passed. The ten ROK divisions contemplated by General MacArthur were still raw and ill-equipped. His impression of their leadership was that it was not of much consequence and that they could not stand up against real forces supported by the Chinese.

GENERAL TWINING

GENERAL TWINING said that, if the Chinese air is used against our ports, it would be very serious and we might have to go against their fields. In reply to General Marshall's question, General Twining went on to say that he definitely felt that, if they attacked in mass with air against our ports, we must hit their fields.

GENERAL BRADLEY agreed but said the decision must be made here if the situation develops and we should not now decide to give authority to the Theater Commander.

ADMIRAL SHERMAN and GENERAL MARSHALL exchanged views on the question of hitting back at the Chinese, with Admiral Sherman indicating that he thought we must fight back but admitting that this might open up attacks from Vladivostok. He added that we could not operate our air bases which are very crowded in the face of very heavy air attack. He urged that no political commitments should be made which did not leave us a free hand to act quickly.

SECRETARY ACHESON agreed fully with the last proposition. He pointed out that, as General Bradley had said, if we do hit back it may bring in Russian air support of the Chinese and we would go from the frying pan into the fire.

In an exchange between GENERAL BRADLEY and GENERAL SMITH, the idea was expressed that if real Russian support of the Chinese developed, we would have to evacuate and probably would be engaged in war.

GENERAL COLLINS repeated that in this situation, we would have to consider the threat or the use of the A-bomb. It would be very difficult to get our troops out if Russian air were used.

ADMIRAL SHERMAN said the Chinese were probably afraid of attacks on their cities and might hold off for that reason.

SECRETARY ACHESON inquired what the view would be if there was a suggestion of our accepting a cease-fire and going back to the 38th Parallel. He inquired whether, from a military point of view, that would seem to be the best choice and whether they would consider we were lucky to get such an arrangement

GENERAL COLLINS, ADMIRAL SHERMAN and GENERAL BRADLEY indicated an affirmative answer.

GENERAL BRADLEY specifically said that any cease-fire would put us in a better position but did not dissent from General Collins' answer to Secretary Acheson that we should not agree on it yet.

GENERAL MARSHALL

GENERAL MARSHALL thought that the acceptance of the cease-fire would represent a great weakness on our part.

SECRETARY ACHESON, in response to a question from General Bradley, then turned to the question of the European problem and referred to his personal message to M. Schuman and M. Schuman's reply. A general discussion ensued as to the desirability of holding a meeting of the Military Committee or of the Defense Ministers before agreement had been reached on the Spofford Plan. The conclusion of this part of the discussion was that Secretary Acheson agreed with the view stated by General Gruenther and others that it would be a mistake to have either meeting unless agreement were assured in advance.

There was also a discussion on the question whether we might proceed to appoint the North Atlantic Commander even before the Supreme Commander is appointed. This was discussed from two points of view. First, whether if we merely set up the North Atlantic Commander and failed to agree on the appointment of a Supreme Commander, would that not have a bad repercussion in Europe? The second question was the effect in Europe of appointing two Americans.

GENERAL SMITH thought that, if the Supreme Commander were appointed first, there would be little stir about subsequently appointing the North Atlantic Commander, but if vice-versa the opposition might build up.

GENERAL MARSHALL said that he had been wondering whether in the absence of agreement on the Spofford Plan we must not try a new approach. No such new approach had been suggested. The only thoughts he had were that we might stop talking about divisions or even about the integrated force. The problem was whether we wished to moderate our present determined stand.

Philip C. Jessup
Ambassador at Large

Attachment
Outline Notes Used by
the Secretary

S/A PCJ:eva